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REPRINTS

THE SCHOOLS OF INDIANAPOLIS—III.

BY PROFESSOR A. C. SHORTRIDGE.

Questions Involved in New School System—Buildings, Teachers and Salaries; A Plan for Training Teachers; Benefits of the Experiment; Encomiums of a Visiting Educator; Origin of the Colored Schools; Prejudice against Colored Children and Legislative Difficulties; First Colored Pupil in the High School; Comparative Standing of the Indianapolis Schools; Features of Excellence.

THE INDIANAPOLIS TRAINING SCHOOL.

When the work of re-establishing a public school system, that can scarcely be said to have had more than a fair beginning, was undertaken in the years 1863-4-5, many questions of importance were up for settlement. The one providing more commodious school buildings, with improved warming and ventilating facilities such as would contribute more fully to the health and comfort of the children, was of vital importance. Along with this was always present in the minds of the school authorities the question of providing more capable and well qualified teachers. Money was scarce, the salaries were low, good teachers could not be brought from other cities and towns for the compensation we could afford them. Most of the teachers already in the schools were of excellent character and ability, always ready for a faithful discharge of duty, but probably no one of them had ever received any special normal school training. How to provide a continuous supply to take the places made vacant by resignations and to fill new positions opened up by the increased attendance of children was the question to be satisfactorily settled.

Meantime I had visited a number of the cities of the West and had noted carefully the work that was being done in their so-called normal schools, but to me all was unsatisfactory. The nature of the instruction was very much such as we were already

giving in our newly organized high school, and therefore was not of a character to suit my needs; there was in them too little of the theory, almost nothing in the practice that would give to the learner clearly defined ideas of school organization, management and instruction. And then, for settlement, was the question as to what we had better do.

The answer to all this was given in the establishment of an Indianapolis school for the training of teachers. This was undertaken early in the year 1867, and the school was got under way on the 1st of March of that year. Amanda P. Funnele, a woman of large ability and rare accomplishment, was found to take the principalship of the school. Miss Funnele was a graduate and for a time a teacher in the Oswego Normal School, and at the time of her engagement to come to Indianapolis was a teacher in the Albany Normal School, at that time one of the foremost schools of its kind in the United States. From its organization to the close of the school year, in 1874, there had been three principals—Miss Funnele, Miss Clara Armstrong and Miss Florinda Williams.

The new school, it might be said, was an experiment. No school exactly of its kind could be found anywhere, and for this reason some doubts existed as to its success. But in the minds of those who had thought it over and over so many times there was very little or none of this. The plan of organization for the school was a simple one and to put it into execution was not at all difficult. To carry out this design the school was organized on the plan of an equal division of time between the theory and the practice of teaching. It had therefore two departments, the one of instruction, the other of practice.

Twelve young women of good education and apparently possessing the characteristics that one would like in a good teacher were chosen to form the first class of pupil-teachers. Six rooms in the newly constructed building at Michigan and Blackford streets were set apart for the use of the school. The children, about three hundred in number, were to be taught by the pupil-teachers and formed the material on which the young teacher would be taught her first lessons in the practical side of her new occupa-

tion. Six of the pupil-teachers were in charge of the schools of practice, while the other section of the same number was in another part of the building receiving instructions from the principal. The section of teachers in charge of the school of practice were expected to conduct the exercises, recitations, etc., and proceed as though they were regular teachers receiving the maximum salaries.

Of the nine hundred and ninety young women who have already completed the training school course of study, practically all have been employed in the schools, and it is safe to say nine hundred were residents of Indianapolis, and it may also be said that three-fourths of them would never have taught a day in this city but for this special training. This, of course, satisfied an oft-repeated demand that people of Indianapolis should be allowed to teach their own children, which was the opinion of many good citizens. To be sure there is some ground for this belief, for there was at that time, and are now, hundreds of young men and women who have the education if they had received the additional training. All told there have been a few less than a thousand young women who have completed the course in training afforded and have entered the schools as teachers and were fitted to do a large share of the best work done in the schools. Last year there were 320 of them in the schools, of which twelve are in the list of supervising principals, eight are directors of practice, six are German teachers and three are high school teachers. What was quite as important, they earned and spent their money in and about their own homes and thereby brought help in a thousand ways to dependent children, and often helpless fathers and mothers.

It is not putting it too strongly to say that this quiet school, so seldom mentioned in the newspapers and about which so little is known by the public, has brought more good than any other single agency, and for more than forty years has formed the great right arm of the school system. But for its influence and that of two or three other helpful agencies, of which I shall speak hereafter, the school system of Indianapolis would have been very

much like the schools in any one of a thousand other cities—and no better.

As soon as results could be seen in this city, schools of a similar character were started in Cincinnati and in Evansville and Fort Wayne, in this State. A committee from the first named city visited Indianapolis to inspect its training school. The Rev. Dr. Mayo, a distinguished Unitarian clergyman of the committee, in an address to the Hamilton county, Ohio, teachers, said:

“Last Monday it was my privilege to spend half a day in the examination of what is doubtless the most complete training school in the Western States. In the upper room of a well-constructed schoolhouse I found a quiet, self-possessed young woman standing before a group of half a dozen girls in familiar conversation on their forenoon’s work as teachers of the five hundred children in the rooms below. Their conversation ranged through the whole realm of the life of childhood, striving to analyze its faculties, comprehend its wants and get into perfect sympathy with its mysterious inward life. Each of the girls told her experience with her class as earnestly as if she knelt at the confessional, under the eye of a criticism as decided as it was sympathetic and kind. Below I saw the working half of the class of pupil-teachers conducting the various exercises of instruction. Through these rooms moved three critic teachers, noting everything, advising, preparing to report in due time to the quiet little lady above. In one room a charming model school was permanently kept by an experienced young woman. One man, with the title of superintendent, was responsible for the order of the little community, and assisted in the teaching of the older classes. I looked with delight too deep for expression on the beautiful spectacle of a school where five hundred children are taught by these twenty girls, who themselves are learning the finest art of modern life. I marked the deep enthusiasm, the blended firmness, self-possession and gentleness, the sweet spirit of co-operation with which they went about their duty. I saw in their faces that they felt they had chosen the better part, were living for a purpose, and not troubled overmuch about their position in American society.”

THE COLORED SCHOOLS.

The question of proper provision for educating colored children in Indianapolis had been urged by men and women many times and in various ways. The average lawmakers are afraid of certain questions, such as the tramp nuisance or the Gypsy business, kindred evils and practices which have no right to exist in a civilized country. The question of woman's suffrage never gets a fair hearing. A way can always be found either in caucus or committee to smother it. It was exactly this way for many years with the question of negro education.

The lawmaker who came to Indianapolis every two years and promised to do great things for the betterment of conditions throughout the State, could be induced to agree to almost anything; but when it came to a show-down by voting on a few questions, negro education among the number, he was not ready. Colored people were all about us and were rapidly increasing in numbers. More than three hundred years ago, when forcibly brought to the American continent, they early embraced the theory about which we hear so much of late, that it is their duty to multiply and replenish the earth. In Indianapolis there were hundreds of adult American citizens and there were many hundreds of children, nearly all of whom were illiterate and many of them vicious, and under these conditions a menace to our civilization. Were they the less so because covered with a black skin? If they were a menace, what was our plain duty?

Fifty years ago the Indiana State Teachers' Association, then and ever since a mighty educational power in the State, began the agitation for colored schools. In ten or twelve years there were signs of approaching success. In 1867 an attempt was made to secure the needed legislation but without avail. An effort was renewed at the opening session of 1869. An amendment to the law was offered and favorable action was taken in the committees and in due time was passed by the Senate. Action at the other end of the capitol was more dilatory. The amendment was hung up till 11:30 the last night of the last session and the chairman of the committee said: "It is now or never." A half dozen persons began the work of getting the members from the cloakroom and

lobbies into their seats. I remember that the late Professor Bell, Thomas J. Vater and a number of other patriotic and humane men did all that was possible for them to do. But the amendment failed for want of a constitutional majority—fifty-one. Forty-six of the requisite number to pass it were present and voted for it. But while that was a majority of all present, it was not enough to pass the measure. But this was the last night of the session and any one who has been present on these occasions knows how things are done. A truthful description of what took place on this particular night would not look well in a newspaper.

So it looked at the moment as if the black children were doomed to run the streets for another term of two years while their fathers and mothers continued to pay their taxes, by the aid of which the children of the more favored race were kept in school ten months of the year. For some reason, I do not remember what, the Governor found it necessary to call an extra session of the Legislature, and it was at this called session, May 13, 1869, that the amendment to the law admitting colored children to public school privilege was passed. In Indianapolis preparations for the accommodation of this large addition we were soon to have were begun; some of the buildings already abandoned were repaired and re-furnished; others were rented, properly seated and made quite comfortable. By the first of September we were ready for all who might apply.

Meantime a constant search was kept up for competent colored men and women who could do the teaching. The plan was to use colored teachers when they could be found, and white ones when they could not. During the summer months, Sunday afternoon meetings were held in some of the colored churches, where needful information was given to parents and guardians as to what would be expected of them when their children were to enter school. These meetings were largely attended, and with much enthusiasm in view of what was soon to occur. When the day came the buildings were crowded early with a herd of rowdy and undisciplined blacks, and with a strong teaching force in number about equally divided between the two races. Order was at once restored, and the work of classifying and grading was begun. Five

years after they were first admitted to the schools there were in attendance at both day and night schools over eight hundred colored pupils.

The manner in which the colored children first gained admission to the high school without the authority of law, I think, has never been correctly told. I can easily tell how it occurred. Two or three years after the law of 1869, providing for the education of colored children, was enacted, a few of them had mastered the course of study in the district schools and were prepared to enter the high school. The law, however, provided for their education in separate schools and a high school for a half dozen children was not to be thought of.

There were up then for settlement some difficult questions. Early in the vacation of 1872, I think it was, a committee of colored men, headed by the Rev. Moses Broyles, a prudent man and a good preacher, came to me to ask what they were to do. Of course, I could not tell them what to do, as the law was clearly against them. The committee was of the opinion that the constitution of the United States ought to admit them, and if it did not, the constitution of the State of Indiana certainly would, as it specifically provided for a system of common schools by the General Assembly wherein tuition should be free and open to all.

Some of the committee were in favor of bringing suit to compel the authorities to admit the children. Here it occurred to me that we could get at the matter in a better way by placing the burden of excluding them on the shoulders of those who wanted them kept out, and that we could thus avoid the cost and delay to those who were in favor of admitting them. I said: "Get ready one of your brightest children and send her to me on the first day of school." This they did.

Early in the morning on the opening day of school Mary Alice Rann, a bright, well-dressed girl, came to me and expressed a wish to enter the high school. Without asking any questions, I walked with her to the room of the principal, George P. Brown, and without any explanation or request, I said: "Mr. Brown, here is a girl that wishes to enter the high school," and then went back to my work.

Mary was admitted and remained in the high school for four years, and at the end of that time received her diploma. Colored children have been admitted to the school ever since without question, now for more than thirty-five years.

On Thursday following the admission of the girl to the high school J. J. Bingham, editor at that time of the *Daily Sentinel*, and member of the Board of School Commissioners, and I were standing in the high school hall, when there came and stood within a few feet of us the girl above referred to, waiting to ask me some question, and Mr. Bingham, seeing her, said:

"I understand you have a nigger in the high school."

I could only say, "Probably so, and I suppose that is the girl."

At this Mr. Bingham said, "I have a long communication in my pocket now in regard to it."

Then I said, "That is a good place for it; better let it stay in your pocket."

The communication was never published and that was about the last I ever heard of it.

There is abundant evidence as to the standing of the Indianapolis schools when compared with the school system in other cities. This evidence comes to us in various ways, a few of which I may mention. Of late years particularly there is a manifest desire on the part of the ruling authorities of foreign countries to know what is being done in this country, educationally. It is a common thing for the South American republics to send commissions to this country for this purpose. A number of the European countries have done the same thing. On their arrival, of course, they go at once to the seat of government, where they are told where to go and what to do to find the information they desire. I am informed that they are always directed to Indiana and Indianapolis when they wish to know of public school organization and methods of instruction. These instructions, of course, came from the Commissioner of Education himself, who has known more of Indianapolis for forty years past than any other person in the country who has not lived in this State.

A New York newspaper some years ago asked one hundred of

the best informed educators of the country to express an opinion as to the best system of schools to be found in any American city. Of the whole number nineteen voted for Indianapolis, twelve for Chicago and twelve for Springfield, Mass., and no other city received more than seven votes.

Other evidence was seen in the columns of a New York magazine, the proprietors of which employed, as they supposed, a competent man for the task and instructed him to visit twenty of the principal cities of the country to examine the organization, management and instruction of schools and to report his observations to the magazine. After the list of cities to be inspected was agreed upon, the task was undertaken and the instructions followed as nearly as could be.

What was written for the magazine I only know in a general way, as I have never read the article. I have, however, had several interviews with the writer, in which he described to me very fully the things that he had seen and heard while on his tour of observation. He gave me the details as to the nature of the instruction he had seen in several of the cities he had visited, particularly in primary schools, and compared this work with what he had seen in Indianapolis. He said that, taking everything into consideration, the Indianapolis schools were in all particulars equal to any he had yet seen, and in her primary schools, particularly, he had seen much that had no equal in any other city.

There are a few things characteristic of the Indianapolis schools that are not common to the schools in other cities. I can briefly state a few of them: First, we have had here for more than forty years a thoroughly nonpartisan control. In no case during that period have I ever heard a man's political views discussed when considering his fitness to do the work of a trustee or school commissioner. The schools to this extent have been free from political influence. Nor have I ever heard, when superintendents, supervisors or teachers were to be employed, any questions asked as to their political or religious convictions. The tests of their fitness to do the work required were always applied in another way. It was made my duty for eleven years to examine all applicants for positions as teachers, and no question was ever asked, the an-

swer to which was expected to reveal the applicant's beliefs on either of these subjects.

Another feature of ours not found in other schools of the country, unless in later years, is that of the special and effective supervision and instruction of our primary schools. As early as 1866 it was plainly seen that the primary schools, as to their instruction, were not getting what they ought to have. To supply this want the trustees asked me to find, if possible, a suitable person to undertake this work. After searching for a time I was compelled to report to the board that no person with the desired training could be found. After some further delay and consideration of the matter it was determined to send one of our own teachers to a New York normal school, to make the special preparation needed, the expenses of which were to be borne by the school board. In pursuance of this plan, Miss Nebraska Cropsey, one of our most promising young women, was asked to go to the Oswego Normal School, to begin a mastery of the course of study in the lowest primary, and ascend from grade to grade as rapidly as possible, and return to Indianapolis when called for. Meantime I had visited the Oswego school and arranged fully the details of the instruction she was to receive.

In due time Miss Cropsey returned and took up the work of supervising the instruction and general management of our primary schools, and has remained in that position continuously until the present time.

That this action, taken at the time and in the manner in which it was, has been largely beneficial to the schools of the city, no one questions. This supervisory work over the primary schools has been for forty years supplemental to the work done in the training school for teachers, and the two working in perfect harmony have brought to the schools of Indianapolis what could not have been secured in any other way. I state it moderately when I say that a half million dollars, in addition to sums already paid out, spread out over the salaries of teachers for the last forty years would not have secured the same desirable ends.

(Concluded in Next Number)